

Signature Assignment

The Core Curriculum requires that the courses within it support students' skill enhancement in the Core Objectives. Objectives assigned to this course include: *Critical thinking; Communication; Empirical and Quantitative Skills; and Social Responsibility.*

The signature assignment in this course is an assigned research paper designed to provide an opportunity for you to demonstrate each of these core objective skills in one project. You will communicate your skill level in the interpretation and use of data and report its impact on your personal conclusions about a topic within the field of study. This paper will require thinking critically about theory in the context of the data as you discover and answer questions such as this one.

- Does the theory still appear to be a valid explanation of the phenomenon?
- Does the data make an alternate explanation more likely?
- Finally, the paper will give you an opportunity to express the impact of conclusions drawn within this paper on your perception of your own social responsibility. Specifically, you should consider the impact of your choices on the rest of society and the proper placement of group boundaries around and influence upon your choices.

You will demonstrate your ability to communicate effectively by writing a college-level paper addressing each of these objectives and including proper citations within the body of the work and at the end of the work. Citations should be in proper APA (American Psychological Association) style format.

Notes for Students:

The paper requires you to specify a problem to study, identify a theoretical explanation of that problem, collect data on the current state of the problem, and critically assess the theory in light of the data.

You are free to choose a sociology topic of interest. I will not assign or choose a topic for you. For example, some students have discussed issues regarding police brutality, high incarceration rates, immigration, sex/gender issues, domestic violence, etc. Please understand that some of these topics (ex: race, crime, immigration, human trafficking, etc.) are a bit broad so you may have to break it down. These topics are merely examples but you can feel free to review the textbook or PowerPoints to get a feel of what sparks your interest. Basically, this is not a definition assignment but attempting to think critically about a social issue and addressing it. Opinions and personal stories are unwelcoming without evidence-based facts to support them.

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The paper should have the following basic outline:

Introduction to the theory and statement of the problem.

In this section of the paper, you will explain the problem identified and identify a theory that purports to explain the causes and/or effects of the problem. This section should contain reference citations as needed to authors whose theories or statements of the problem have informed your understanding.

Choose ONE of the theories to incorporate into the paper:

- 1) Conflict theory
- 2) Functionalist theory
- 3) Interactionist theory

Current Trends in the Data

In this section of the paper, you must gather a minimum of three current (no more than 10 years old) empirical sources of information that inform your understanding of the link between the theory and problem discussed above. **DO NOT** use wiki websites, blogs, news/media outlet sources, or unprofessional sources.

Thinking Critically

In this section of the data, reexamine your theory in light of the newly acquired data. Is it still a rational explanation or does it lack ability to explain some aspect of the problem? Are there alternative explanations or alterations in the theory that would better fit the data?

Social Responsibility

In this final section of the paper, relate the theory and the data to individual responsibility within our society. Is this just a personal choice or does it have consequences for the society at large? What interest does society have and what boundary should there be on its influence? Support your argument rationally with what you have learned.

Citations

A complete listing of referenced cited within the paper must be included in APA format at the end of the paper.

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How to format the Signature Assignment

Signature Writing Assignment (200 points total) - Students will be required to complete a writing project designed to measure skill in each of the core objectives above. The assignment details are located in Canvas under the Signature Assignment module.

- The paper will be a minimum of 3 full pages, double spaced, and typed format.
- Include a cover page and references page. This is not included in the 3-page minimum.
- The font is Times New Roman, 12-font with 1" margins.
- Upload as a Word (or equivalent) or PDF file. Do Not submit compressed or zip files.
- The paper requires research citations as appropriate in APA format. Reference Purdue OWL APA website.
- Completion of this assignment is required and no student will receive a passing grade without completing it.